



Myths of Deployment: 10 things leaders may believe and what their soldiers really think

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Myths and Facts of this Presentation

MYTH

- This presentation is an accurate representation of what all soldiers and leaders think.

FACT

- Like all myths, the myths of deployment have some basis in truth but are not accurate.
- Not all leaders believe these myths.
- We wouldn't know what good leaders do if many leaders weren't good.
- This presentation is based on what soldiers and leaders have told us.



Myths and Facts of Data Collection

MYTH

- The information we gather from surveys and interviews is unbiased and a comprehensive reflection of life in the military.

FACT

- There is a negative bias to what we ask and what soldiers report.
- Criticism is difficult to hear and it's easier to dismiss it as being relevant to some other unit.
- Although we focus on problems (because that's what needs attention), there are many positive components that can be sustained.



Myth #1

**I can't solve that
problem at my
level.**



Reality #1

What soldiers want leaders to know:

Soldiers expect leaders to solve problems.

At every level there are things that leaders can do to make a difference.

Soldiers always look to their leaders for guidance and support.

There is no substitute for leading by example.



Bottom Line #1

We never heard a soldier
say:

***“My leader is not
responsible for this
problem.”***



Myth #2

**Soldiers get
plenty of
recognition.**



Reality #2

What soldiers want leaders to know:

Being told that they did a good job once during the deployment isn't enough.

Awards don't indicate who has really done a good job.

Being told in formation that the unit was successful doesn't make soldiers feel recognized.

Being told they are appreciated makes a difference



Bottom Line #2

We never heard a soldier say:

“Wow, I got a NATO medal. Now I know I was really appreciated.”



Myth #3

**Block leave
ensures
soldiers have
enough time
to recover.**



Reality #3

What soldiers want leaders to know:

Between the ramp-up, the deployment, and the recovery, the actual deployment is closer to 12 months, not 6.

Garrison is more stressful than deployment.

Families appreciate when block leave is protected and can be counted on.

— Soldiers respect leaders who say no to higher ups when the unit is over-



Bottom Line #3

We never heard a soldier
say:

***“The Army ensures
that I have sufficient
time to recover from
the rigors of
deployment.”***



Myth #4

My soldiers must know what's going on because I told my Commanders during the staff meeting.



Reality #4

What soldiers want leaders to know:

No one tells them what's really going on.

Soldiers won't ask if they don't know.

Soldiers make up rumors if leaders don't tell them the facts.

Telling soldiers you don't know is better than not telling them anything at all.

When soldiers know what's going on,



Bottom Line #4

We never heard a soldier say:

“Wow, the email traffic in this unit is great. I always feel like I really know what’s going on.”



Myth #5

**Soldiers tell
their spouses
what's on the
unit calendar.**



Reality #5

What soldiers want leaders to know:

The FRG doesn't work in their unit and no one cares.

Many soldiers don't tell their spouses what's going on because (circle one):

- a) Their spouses can hear about anything important on AFN.
- b) Soldiers don't want to hear their spouses complain.
- c) The information is going to change anyway.
- d) All of the above.



Bottom Line #5

We never met a spouse who
said:

***“I just have too much
information about this
unit.”***

or

***“All my spouse does is
talk about upcoming
unit events.”***



Myth #6

**Soldiers know
exactly what to
expect by
looking at the
unit training
calendar.**



Reality #6

What soldiers want leaders to know:

We never follow the unit training calendar.

I never know when the duty day is going to end.

We sit around for 6 hours, cram 8 hours of work into the last two hours and have to stay late.

The only thing predictable is that things are unpredictable.



Bottom Line #6

We never heard a soldier
say:

***“Working in this unit
is like being in the Air
Force.”***



Myth #7

**Deployment
policies are
clear and
consistently
applied.**



Reality #7

What soldiers want leaders to know:

There are double standards: policies aren't consistently applied across rank, units, Task Forces, services, or countries.

Verbal policies lead to confusion.

Policies need to be explained or else soldiers will think leaders don't trust them and/or are unnecessarily restricting their behavior.

Soldiers are more likely to accept a policy when they are involved in enforcing it.



Bottom Line #7

We never heard a soldier
say:

***“Our unit’s policies
are based on a rich
oral tradition.”***



Myth #8

**Soldiers don't
like
peacekeeping.**



Reality #8

What soldiers want leaders to know:

Soldiers like deployments and the chance to use their MOS skills.

Leaders set the tone for how soldiers think about the value of peacekeeping.

Soldiers like the chance to be involved in community improvement projects and to get off the base camp.

Peacekeeping missions improve soldiers' skills in many areas such as leadership and decision-making.



Bottom Line #8

We never heard a soldier
say:

***“I’d rather be back in
garrison as part of the
rear detachment.”***



Myth #9

**Suffering
together
strengthens
unit cohesion.**



Reality #9

What soldiers want leaders to know:

Suffering needlessly makes them angry.

Suffering needlessly makes them think leaders don't care and that leaders don't know what they're doing.

Soldiers want tough, realistic training.

Soldiers don't mind working long hard hours if it's necessary.



Bottom Line #9

We never heard a soldier
say:

***“We have it too easy -
we just can’t develop
camaraderie in such
luxury.”***



Myth #10

**Soldiers aren't
what they used
to be.**



Reality #10

The Bottom Line

Soldiers are the best they've ever been.

Soldiers are smarter, better trained, and in better shape than ever.

Soldiers are professional, take their jobs seriously, and are patriotic.



Something to Consider

We never heard a **soldier** say:

***“If we had better soldiers,
we’d have better leaders.”***



Bridging the Gap

What leaders wished their soldiers knew:

Leaders care about soldiers.

Leaders want to know how to make things better for soldiers and their organization.

These issues are challenging otherwise they would have solved them.

Leaders are soldiers too.